Concionatorum Instructio:

OR,

RULES FOR PREACHING.

A

Conscientious Inquiries:

OR

PRIESTS

FOR

PREACHING.

Concionatorum Instructio:

Rules for Preaching;

OR,

ADVICE

TO ALL

NOVICES

IN THAT

DIVINE ART.

Plainly intimating what **Subject**, **Method** and **Style** may be Requisite in it.

BEING A

LETTER, written to One newly Admitted into ORDERS; But Recommended to All of that HOLY FUNCTION.

Give Attendance to Exhortation, 1 Tim. 4. 5.
Which shews the way of rightly dividing the Word of Truth. 2 Tim. 2. 15.

LONDON,

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RULES FOR Preaching, &c.

SIR,

WHEN you enter upon the Work of the *Miniſtry*, you will eaſily agree with me, that you are to engage in a very Weighty and Serious Employment; in which you are to deliver Meſſages from the God of Heaven to wandering Mankind, whom you undertake to conduct through a World of Errors, Sin and Miſery, to a Heaven of Bliſs, Happineſs and Peace. Conſidering which, you cannot but ſee Rea-

ſon to conclude, that you are to Separate your ſelf from the World, and the Affairs of it, as much as you can, that you may, with the more Diligence and Care, wholly attend upon ſo great a Buſineſs. And the greater the Work is, the more you will ſee your ſelf oblig'd to engage in all thoſe Studies, and improve all thoſe Helps, and Means that can be thought Neceſſary to fit you for ſuch an Undertaking. As for the Studies you are to engage in, you, doubtleſs, know that one ſort is but Preparatory to another; as the learning the *Alphabet* is in order to *Reading*, and learning the *Grammar* in order to the underſtanding thoſe *Languages*, that may fit a Perſon for the *reading* thoſe Uſeful Authors; and the *reading* thoſe Uſeful Authors, is but in order to the informing your Underſtanding, and the rendering the Perſon capable of making a Judgment of thoſe Things he at any time meets with.

The Reaſon therefore why you learn'd *Latin*, is not, that with Eaſe you

you may be able to *cap Latin Verſes*, or *criticiſe upon Words*, as ſome too pedantically do; but that by Reading you may be able to underſtand thoſe Learned Mens Works, who have written in that Tongue. So the Knowledge of *Greek*, and *Hebrew*, is but in order to the apprehending the Meaning of ſome obſcure Place in Scripture, which can only be underſtood by being acquainted with the peculiar Idioms of thoſe Languages.

I ſhall take it for granted, that you have fitted your ſelf with the Knowledge of theſe *Tongues*, ſo far at leaſt as to be able to *read*, and *underſtand* the moſt Uſeful Authors, and *apprehend* the *Idiom* of theſe Languages: and I muſt alſo preſume, that you have gone through a Courſe of *Philoſophy*, ſufficient at leaſt to direct you how to *form* and *purſue* any Reaſon from any Topick, for the inſtructing you in the Nature of *Moral*, *Natural*, and *Metaphyſical Entities*; all which will be Neceſſary for you to have ſome Acquaintance with, that you may be

be able to underſtand thoſe Terms of Art, uſed among the Learned, form a right Judgment of all Things, regulate the Manner of Reaſoning, and be rendred capable of apprehending what Method, Style, and Matter, will be at any time fit for your Purpoſe, that you may manage all to your beſt Advantage.

Preſuming upon theſe Things, I ſhall detain you no longer upon the Preliminaries, but proceed immediately to the Buſineſs of *Preaching*, in which you have ſollicited my Advice; and though in this Matter I might with great Advantage refer you to others who have at large written on this Subject; yet, ſeeing you have unboſom'd your Thoughts to me, by ſome Perſonal Conferences, whereby I have had the opportunity of diſcovering wherein you will, in my poor Opinion, moſt need my Advice; I ſhall be capable of ſpeaking more particularly to the Caſe, and therefore think my ſelf oblig'd to comply with your Deſire.

And

And that I may do you the best Service I can in this Affair, I esteem it requisite to offer you my Thoughts upon these following Heads;

Of the { Subject, Method and Style } of Sermons.

Of the Subject *of Sermons.*

As for the *Subject* of Sermons, you may very well know the Subject Mat. of those Discourses ought to be some *Truths* and *Duties of Religion*, which are to be Explain'd, and recommended to Auditory; for you come not into the *Pulpit* to talk of *Law*, *Physick*, or *Philosophy*, or to tell pleasant Stories, or doleful Legends, but to discourse of those things in *Religion*, wherein God's Glory and the Good of Mens precious Souls are deeply concern'd. This is, and ought to be yours, nay every one's *Subject*, and concerning that, I would humbly advise you in this manner.

First, Pitch always upon the most Useful and Pertinent Subject that you can; those I call most Useful that are the most generally Edifying, such as are the *Love of God to Mankind*, the *Fall of Man*, the *Desert of Sin*, the *Way to avoid the Misery Sin deserved*, the *Duty we owe to God*, *our Neighbours*, and *our Selves*. Those I call Pertinent, that are most fitted to the Capacities and Necessities of the Auditory; to both which you ought to have a special regard in the Choice of *Subjects*, and not to pitch upon high Matters to a Country Auditory, who have not Capacity of apprehending them; and you ought to consider also the Necessity of your Hearers, and to handle such Subjects, as upon enquiry you find most suitable to what they Need, this you will be more particularly oblig'd to regard, when you come to be settled in any Place; where, upon Conversing with the People, you will find what most generally they are Ignorant of, what Duties they mostly neglect, or what Sin or Error they

are

are moſtly addicted to; and ſo you ſhall level your Diſcourſe accordingly. But in the mean time, be ſure to avoid all *Unuſual* and *Affected Subjects*, which will rather *amuſe* than *edify your Hearers*, for the great Things you ought to aim at, is the Edifying of others; for that, you doubtleſs know, ought to be the End of all *Preaching*; and you can't in a better manner promote that End, than by taking Care to chuſe the moſt Uſeful and Pertinent Subjects, in which you deſign ſome Particular Advantage to the Auditory; which, if you ſo do, your *Sermons* will not be at random, as thoſe are who Preach as Men that ſhoot at Rovers, and never hit the Mark, becauſe they never aimed at any.

Secondly, Whilſt you are in theſe Circumſtances, *viz.* but a Beginner in this Work, chuſe not a Subject that is *too high* and *lofty* (that is) to handle, but chuſe that which is moſt *Eaſy* and *Common*, and which you have ſome competent Underſtanding of, before you

read any further about it; for if you ſhould attempt a Subject above your preſent Reading and Capacity, you will quickly be puzzled and diſcouraged, and then either break off from it, or elſe handle it with little Satisfaction, either to your ſelf or others; but when you Engage in a Subject you have already ſome Underſtanding of, you will go through it with Courage and Comfort, becauſe all things will offer themſelves with Eaſe and Clearneſs to you.

Thirdly, Having pitch'd upon a *Subject*, then read all the *Authors* you have upon that Subject, the *Index* ſhewing you where the Author treats of it; and in reading, mark the Place of *Scripture*, urg'd for what is ſaid; obſerve the Method, the Reaſons, and the Inferences the Author uſes, which poſſibly may be ſomething to your Purpoſe. By doing this, you will become more, and more acquainted with *Method*, and you will ſee how your Notions agree with others, you will be furniſhed with much Matter, and meet with

with ſuch Hints, as will be capable to be improv'd by you to great Advantages: but of this be Cautioned, that you make as little Uſe as may be of the *Expreſſions* of thoſe Authors, but take as much of the *Senſe* and *Reaſon* of 'em as you find needful, and uſeful for your Purpoſe, and put them all into your *Method* and *Order*.

Fourthly, Having fix'd upon your *Subject*, and read upon it, then chuſe ſome pertinent *Text* to head your Subject; and if the reading does not furniſh you to your Mind, as ſometimes it may not, then conſult your *Bible* and *Concordance*, and be ſure to chuſe ſuch a *Text* as does plainly direct and lead you to your deſign'd Subject; not ſuch an one as, by long Inferences and forc'd Interpretations, is conſtru'd, perhaps againſt its natural Inclination, to look towards the Subject; leſt the Diſcourſe be found impertinent to the Text, and then again an impertinent Text to a good Diſcourſe, is as incoherent as a Glaſs Head to a Golden Body.

Fifthly

Fifthly and Laſtly, in your *ſecret Prayers* deſire God to direct you, in your Choice of fit Subjects; ſuch as may be for his Glory, and the Edification of others, and beſeech him to help you in the Managing one to the beſt Advantage; ſeeing you are to ſpeak in the Name of God to his People, you cannot but think it fit and reaſonable, you ſhould ſeek for his Direction and Bleſſing in that Matter, and you need not doubt of his Aſſiſtance, if you duly addreſs to him. Thus much Obſerve, as to the *Subject matter* of your *Sermons*.

Of the METHOD *to be Obſerved in the making them.*

As to the *Method* your are to obſerve in making *Sermons*; after you have choſen the *Text* and *Subject*, you will do well to manage it in this following Manner:

Firſt, You may uſher in your Diſcourſe with an handſome and pertinent *Preface*; which is to be done, by pitching

ing upon some general and well known *Topick*, and handling it so, as to bring it down to the *Text* and *Subject*; but you must take Care that you do not often make use of the same *Topick* for different *Subjects*; for that will not only argue a poorness of Fancy, but make you also Ridiculous: so that your *Topick* ought to be as various as your *Subjects*, and you should manage your Discourse so, as to give an Epitome of your following Discourse in it, to captivate the Auditors Minds, and to engage them to Attention. But the doing of this requires much Reading, great Foresight, and no small Judgment in Things; and therefore it's a little difficult to manage it as it ought to be; and since it is not absolutely Necessary to be used, I would advise you to use it but rarely, till more Reading, or Ripeness of Judgment does qualifie you for it: for if you should strictly tye your self up to it, you may be often so puzzled, as to occasion much loss of Time, in striving to do a thing to no Purpose; which gives you no small Discouragement

ment in proceeding in your main Work; but whenever you luckily hit on a main Topick, and find your Thoughts large and free upon it, then purſue it, but ſeldom or never elſe.

Secondly, The next thing after the *Preface*, is, the giving an account of the *Context* of the Words; ſhewing what the occaſion of 'em is, and how they refer or have a Dependance upon what goes before, or what comes after: in this thing ſometimes it will be Neceſſary to give an account of the whole foregoing Chapter or Chapters, ſometimes but of ſome part of it, *viz.* of ſome few Verſes, juſt going before the Text, according as it lies in the Chapter; for the Text is perhaps, either ſome Duty, Promiſe, Threat, or the Conſequence or Reaſon of ſome ſuch aforementioned; or 'tis the uſhering in of ſomewhat in the Sequel to be ſpoken of;—— Whatever be the Occaſion of the Words, it muſt be taken Notice of, and a brief but plain Account given of it, that all who hear you may ſee the Tendency of the

the Words, and apprehend the true Deſign, and Meaning of 'em; and that you alſo may take the Text in its true and genuine Senſe, and accordingly raiſe pertinent *Obſervations* from it; and to the End you may be able to give a very clear account of the *Context*, you ſhould read the *Contents* of the *Chapter* it ſelf, obſerving the Occaſion and Coherence of the Words, and conſult Commentators upon the Place, who will help you much in this Matter. But I muſt add, that it's not neceſſary always, to give a large account of the Context, for ſometimes the Text is clear enough to be underſtood without it, and ſometimes it has ſo little Dependance upon what precedes or follows, (as in divers Places taken out of the *Proverbs*,) that a Line or two will be all that will be neceſſary for the giving an account of it: in ſuch Caſes it will be expedient to go immediatly to the *Text*; and therefore,

Thirdly, The next thing you come to is the *Text*; in handling which of which you

you will find your self oblig'd to do as follows;

1. You are to *Divide* the *Text* into its several Parts; as first, *General*, and then *Particular*, if it will bear that Division.

In General,

It's either first an Exhortation to a Duty, or Dehortation from Sin, or 'tis a Denouncing God's Judgments, or a setting forth his Promises, or a declaring the Almighty's Will, or a predicating something of some Persons or People.

In Particular,

Some Action or Place, some Person or Time, some Reason or Thing, or other Circumstances may be consider'd; all this must be rank'd in this Right and Due Order.

2. As soon as you have *divided* your Text

Text you must, in speaking of the several Divisions, Explain whatever wants Explication, shewing in what Sense any ambiguous Expression must be taken, and, if need be, deduce the Words from the *Original*, shewing how they are Applicable to the Design of the Text. This you should do without being tedious, or long upon any Criticism; and then you should conclude all, with some plain and clear *Paraphrase*, either upon every part of the Text, as you speak of it, or upon the whole together at the end; that so your Auditory may perceive the plain Meaning of your Text as well as your self.

3. Having *divided* and *explained* the *Text*, then you are to raise the *Propositions* or *Observations* from it, either from the *Context* or the *Words* of the *Text*, as you shall see occasion. The Example, Consequence, Time, Place, Occasion, or other Circumstances spoken of, or imply'd in the Text, will give you a good Rise for many pertinent *Propositions* fit to be treated on.

But in your Forming and Raising *Observations*, let me have leave to give you some few Cautions.

1. Draw no *Observation* from the Text, but what will appear to rise naturally from it, by the Exposition you have given of it.

2. Put no more Matter into your *Proposition*, than what may be easily referable to some thing in your Text; lest in your handling of it, you should run away from the Text you ought to keep to.

3. Let your *Propositions* be couched in the Plainest and Briefest, but most Significant Expressions you can, for long *Propositions*, and those also of obscure Terms, make 'em hard to be understood, and harder to be remember'd.

4. If you make any *Observation* from the Text, distinguish betwixt those that are directly contain'd in it, and those

that are but implicitly referable to it, and handle the former only largely, and the latter as briefly; for 'tis presum'd when you chuse your Text, you design'd it should head some particular Subject you had pitch'd upon; and therefore you ought to be more large in those *Propositions* that from your Text lead directly and naturally to the pretended Subject, than in those that come in only by the by.

4. After this Dispatch of the Text, you come next to treat of the *particular Propositions* or *Observations* contained in it, and so you enter upon the *main Body* of your Discourse; in doing which, you will be oblig'd to use your utmost Care and Skill, that you may speak Pertinently, Clearly, and to the Edification of the Auditory. You will here need several Directions about the Method 'twill be fit for you to observe, in the Management of this Part of the Sermon.

And I must Observe, that all *Propo-*

sitions

sition will not be capable to be handled after One and the same Manner and Method, because of the various Matter that will be contained in divers of them, according to the Nature of which the Method must always be. I would not therefore have you think your self always obliged to use one and the same *Method*, but still adapt your *Method* to the Nature of the *Proposition* and *Subject* you handle, and always use such as makes things plain to the Understanding of your Auditory, and as renders them most clear and evident, and convincing to the Minds of your Hearers.

I shall *first* shew the common Method ordinarily used in the handling of most *Propositions*, and then hint a little what Method will be proper in some Cases.

First, As for the common Method ordinarily used, 'tis this: As soon as you have named your *Proposition*, and observ'd a little how it arises from the *Context* or *Text*, then you ought to consider the *Terms* of it, and if any thing be

be *obscure* or *ambiguous* in them, explain and clear it before you go any farther, that your Auditors may the better perceive what 'tis you go upon.

Secondly, If there be no *Ambiguity* or *Obscurity* in the Terms of your *Proposition*, as sometimes there may not, then consider the *Subject Matter* of it, and open the Nature of it, by shewing what is imply'd, wherein the thing you are to Preach of consists, and in what Sense it ought to be understood; as, if the Subject of your *Proposition* be some Duty to be practised, some Sin to be avoided, or some fundamental Truth to be own'd, shew at large how it must be understood, what it consists in or implies; and prove as much of what you say as you can, by Scripture; this will be the way to make all things clear before you.

Thirdly, If the *Subject Matter* of your *Proposition* be commonly known, or plain enough in it self, then you may omit those Things, and proceed immediately

diately to shew the Grounds and Reasons of your *Propositions*.

In managing of which, you must be careful of several things; as,

First, You must take care to chuse fit *Topicks* to draw your *Reasons* from; what those *Topicks* are, tis presum'd you have learn'd in your Books of *Logick* and *Oratory*, such as are the *Nature of the Thing*, the *Profitableness*, the *Necessity*, the *Absurdity*, and the *Danger* of the contrary, *&c.* many of which your Reading, as well as Reason, will suggest. But take heed that you draw not a *Reason* from a wrong *Topick*, for then you will go off from your Subject, and fall into Impertinencies.

Secondly, When you have fix'd upon a good *Reason*, take heed and urge it home; do not go off from it upon other Matters that have no reference to it, but keep close to it, so that the Auditors may perceive the Force of it, and to that end, after you have explained the *Meaning*

ing of the *Reaſon*, ſhew where the *Strength* of it lies, and illuſtrate it with a Similitude or Example, and add ſome very pertinent place of *Scripture*, that may as it were put Life into all.

If your Reaſon be grounded upon ſome *Suppoſition*, prove the *Suppoſition* by ſome place of *Scripture*, or other Evidence, before you make your *Inference*, that you may not ſeem to beg the queſtion.

Take heed that your *Reaſons* do not Interfere one with another, (*i.e.*) that one *Reaſon* be not the ſame with one before urged, in other Words, for that will nauſeate the Auditors, and weaken the Attention, as well as reflect upon your own Judgment; rather than fall into a coincidency of *Particulars* either in this, or any other *Particular*, (for in all Caſes and Places it ought to be avoided) let me here, once for all, Adviſe you rather to keep the *Number* of *Particulars* ſmall, than, by endeavouring to make them *Numerous*, run the hazard of ſo great an Indecency; for a few *Particulars* well manag'd, and urg'd, may more ſatisfy and convince than many;

for People are rather tired than edified by a *multitude of Particulars* on one thing.

Fourthly, Affect not to be *over large* in urging your Reaſons; leſt, if you indulge that Humour, your Auditory loſe your *Reaſons*, and you loſe your Self in ſo large a Field, and forget what you were urging; as on the one hand you ſhould not be ſo *Brief*, as to make your Reaſoning *Obſcure*; ſo, on the other, you ſhould not be ſo *Large*, as to give Occaſion to your Auditors to loſe the Force of it; but obſerve ſuch a Mean, as to be *Large* without *Tediouſneſs*, and *Brief* without *Obſcurity*.

After you have thus urg'd the *Grounds*, you come to the *Inferences* of what has been ſaid; in doing of which you muſt take Care that they be *Logically* made, (*i. e.*) that you infer no more than the Premiſſes will bear, and that the thing which you do infer, appear plainly to be the Genuine and Natural Conſequences of what has been ſaid; otherwiſe you will fall into great *Impertinencies*, and appear to the Intelligent to have no very good Logical Head. Now, the *Inferences* uſually made from them are ſome ſuch as theſe; *Firſt*,

First, Sometimes to inform Persons of several Things, as of the *Folly* and *Madness* of some *Courses*, the *Wisdom* and *Happiness* of others, the *Equity* of God's dealing with Men, the *Grounds* and *Reasons* of many Things; in all which you may descend to Particulars, and show how or wherein the thing is, or is not so.

Secondly, Sometimes it may serve to *reprove* or *condemn* the Practice of several People; in the Prosecution of which you may shew *who* is Reproved, and *why*,; and then instance from the *Scripture* Examples of Persons *condemn'd* and *punish'd* for the like Cases.

Thirdly, Sometimes your *Inference* may be by way of *Refutation* of some Error, that may then be rife amongst the People; and in this, you may urge several Places in *Holy Writ*, and some Reasons against it. But take heed that they are all Pertinent, and meddle not with an *Error* you can't sufficiently Refute, lest in stead of Suppressing it, you Spread it the more.

Fourthly, Sometimes what you have said may serve to *comfort* Persons, in par-

ticular Cases; in which you may Answer the *Objections* despairing Souls make against the *Comforts* you would afford them; but in these you must be very Pertinent, Clear, and very Satisfactory, or else it would be far better that they were let alone.

Fifthly, Sometimes you are to infer an *Exhortation* from what has been said; wherein you *perswade* People either to the *Performance* of some *Duty*, or *dissuade* them from the *Perpetrating* some *Sin*. In the Prosecution of which you may shew the *Nature* of the thing, if you have not done it before, as also the *Reasonableness* of doing, or not doing it; and then you may give Directions how to do, or avoid any thing: and if there be occasion, you may *Answer Objections* made against what you urge, and resolve *Cases* of *Conscience*, if any lye in your way, and so shut up the whole Discourse upon that *Proposition* with some few very Pertinent and Cogent *Motives*, such as you think will be most effectual; which you are to urge in the most Moving way that your Oratory, and Rhetorick will enable you: for 'tis in the closing

closing part of your Discourse that Oratory, and Rhetorick are of most Use. For you must *first inform* the *Understanding*, and then *move* the *Affections*; and not *move* the *Affections* without *Information* given to the *Understanding*: for Mens Affections are Wild and Blind, unless a good Understanding guide and direct them; this *moving of the Affections* is the Spur to enforce all that has been said; and therefore, without some cogent Motives, you seem to neglect the most necessary Part of your Discourse, *viz.* the *pressing home* of what has been said, without which you seem to leave your Auditors indifferent whether they will do as you have said or no.

This is the usual and common Method in handling Propositions, which you will do well generally to observe in as many of those Particulars as you shall find will be Pertinent to the Subject, and Text you are engag'd in; I say *Pertinent*, for in those Matters you must judge how far you are concern'd in the Particulars of this Method, and how far not, by the Pertinency of them to your Subject. You must offer at no Impertinencies

nencies; and then it will ſuffice in ſuch Caſes to ſhew only.

1. *The* Nature *of the Thing.*
2. *The* Grounds *and* Reaſons *of it.*
3. *Give ſome* Directions *how to do or avoid the thing ſpoken of.*
4. *Conclude with ſome* Motives *for that Purpoſe.*

This and the like *Method* may be ſufficient in ſome few Caſes; but when you have the *General Method* before your Eyes, your own Judgment will quickly determine how far and in what Caſes 'tis to be follow'd, and how far and in what not. And therefore, as to that point, I muſt leave you, after I have taken the Liberty to adviſe you to ſome particular things, which perhaps you will find Uſeful to you in this Matter.

1. After you have *Read* upon the *Subject* and *Text*, then ſit down and conſider what *Method* you had beſt obſerve, and draw a Scheme of it upon a piece of Paper, placing every Particular under the ſeveral Heads you deſign to ſpeak of; (as for example) placing your *Reaſons* under

der the Head of *Reasons* for it; and *Inferences* under the Head of *Inferences* deducible, or drawn from it; and so *Directions* and *Motives*; you may add to, or substract from this, as upon second Thoughts you find Occasion: But when you make your *Sermon* without such a Scheme, you cannot there utter things as you would, without great Trouble and Loss.

2. Having the Scheme before you whatever *Place of Scriptures*, *Reasons*, *Inferences*, *Hints*, &c. you meet with in reading or meditating that are pertinent to any particular Point you shall speak to, you may then place them under that Point; for all things may not come to your Mind at once, and a Thought is so quickly gone (let your Memory be almost never so Tenacious and Retentive) that you will hardly retain it, unless it be in this manner committed to Paper.

3. Whatever *place of Scripture* you make use of, which you do not understand, consult the ablest Commentators on that Passage for the Meaning of it, that you may not apply it to a wrong Sense.

4. In

4. In *Urging* things, do but very rarely uſe any other *Sayings* or *Examples*, but what are contain'd in *Holy Writ*. For the *Scripture* is the *Rule* and *Foundation* of your *Manners*, and (as *Faith*) not other Mens Sayings: Beſides we live in an Age that expects *Scripture* and *Reaſon* for what they are to believe, and do, more than the Authorities of Men; therefore uſually prove your Propoſitions by ſome pertinent *Scripture* firſt, and this is that will prove ſo effectual as to be both Convincing and Satisfactory.

5. In *Raiſing* and *Anſwering Objections*, be ſure to raiſe none but ſuch as are uſually made, and ſuch as you can well and ſolidly Anſwer; for if you weakly anſwer an Objection, you muſt confirm the Auditory in thoſe *Doubts*, and perhaps make 'em alſo doubt what they did not before.

6. In the managing any *Argument* or urging any *Truth*, take heed you do not urge any thing Inconſiſtent with what you have ſaid before, nor contradictory to any *Article of Faith*; that you may not run the hazard either of Recanting what you have ſaid, or of Defending an Erroneous Abſurdity.

7. In

7. In handling *Controverſies*, be ſure to ſtate the Controverſie aright, and urge your Arguments againſt any Tenent, without harſh Reflections on the Authors of them; withal remembring that 'tis your part to *Confute the Error*, and *Reclaim the Erroneous*; neither of which you do, when you uſe bitter Invectives and harſh Language, inſtead of Arguments; on the contrary you confirm the Erroneous, and deſtroy that common Charity, which ought to be amongſt all Chriſtians, of what Perſuaſion ſo ever.

From all which you may eaſily ſee how Neceſſary 'tis you ſhould be acquainted with Scripture, and ſome *Body of Divinity*; for ſuch an Acquaintance will enable you to back all Things with *Scripture*, ſpeak always conſiſtently and methodically, and help you to underſtand Controverſies aright, and anſwer Objections, and confute Errors in a due Manner. Whereas, without this Acquaintance, you ſpeak at random, and talk little elſe but *Morality* and *Philoſophy*, and if you do venture upon *Divinity*, 'tis a hundred to one if you ſpeak not

inconsistently. I would therefore by all Means advise you to read the *Scripture* carefully, and that often too, and consult Commentators upon any dubious Place you meet with, and be well acquainted with some Body of Divinity, as *Windeline*, *Usher*, &c. but till you have done that, consult the 39 *Articles of the Church of England*, and some good *Catechisms*, for in them the very Sum and Substance of all *Christian Religion* is comprehended; this is what, with as much Brevity as possible I can at present inform you, as to your Observation of the *Method* I have propos'd.

Of the STYLE *of Sermons.*

As to the *Style*, in which you should pen or deliver your *Sermons*, you will not, I presume, deny but that there ought to be had a particular Regard; especially when 'tis consider'd that Sermons are design'd for the Edification of the People, and that People are little likely to be Edified by those Discourses that are deliver'd in a *Style* or *Language* unsuitable to their Capacities: You will doubtless

doubtleſs therefore give me leave to ſet down what is, in my poor Opinion, the *Style* not very fit to be uſed, and what is convenient alſo; and then likewiſe ſhew you how a *good Style* may be attain'd

As for the *Style* that ordinarily is not very fit to be uſed, I conceive.

1. That all high and affected ſtrains of *Rhetorick* ought to be avoided; for theſe things are fitter for School-Boys Declamations, than for ſolid Sermons. 'Tis true, natural Wit is good, and that part of Rhetorick that is Perſwaſive, is uſeful in its proper Place, which, as I have already ſaid, is in *Urging Motives*; but when we ſtrain hard to bring in a Witticiſm, and force along a Rhetorical Flower into our Diſcourſe, whithout conſidering that we go out of our way for it, this is not only too Ludierous for ſo ſerious a Matter as *Preaching* is, but it alſo makes ſuch as uſe it moſtly Ridiculous.

2. All ſtrange and hard *Latiniz'd*, or *Græcis'd* Words ſhould be avoided; for the uſe of 'em is as bad to the People as ſpeaking in an unknown Tongue, which the Fooliſh admire, but the Wiſer ſort laugh at and deſpiſe.

3. All *assuming* and *peremptory Speeches* ought to be avoided; you ſhould not make your Saying ſo, as an Argument, nor ſpeak much of your ſelf; to inſinuate this or that is done, and then Arrogate the doing of it to your ſelf.

4. All Words that border upon *Blaſphemy*, ſhould be avoided; for they grate in a ſober Auditor's Ears, and are not ſweeten'd in the leaſt by an Uſhering 'em in with, *And if I may ſay ſo*, or, *Pardon the Expreſſion*; for, the Intelligent Hearers will not give you the Leave and Pardon you crave, and therefore do not truſt to them for it: thoſe things therefore, in your *Style*, you are to avoid; but ſuch an one as you ought always to make uſe of, is as follows.

1. Your *Style* ſhould be *plain* and *natural*, and ſuch as comes *freely* from you, and ſuch as the meaneſt Capacity may be able to Underſtand; for this anſwers the End of Preaching, and therefore you ſhould remember, that if the meaneſt Capacity underſtand you, the Learned likewiſe muſt; but not *e contra*.

2. Though your *Style* ſhould be *plain*, yet it ought not to be *flat* and *dull*, like

to

to two Country People talking one to the other, but *Manly* and *Serious*, and to be kept as *even* as you can, that you may Delight as well as Edify, rather than tire the Auditory. A *Manly Serious Style* becomes the Buſineſs you are upon.

3. When you ſpeak to your Auditory, let it be in the *Plural Number*, rather than in the *Singular*, and *you*, and *we*, rather than *thou* and *thee*; the former way is more comprehenſive and ſoft, whereas the latter is a little rude, and what in this refin'd Age may be called a little uncivil.

4. Let your *Style* be *decent* and *clear*, far from calling of People and Things by *Ill-Names*, and void of all Expreſſions that look towards *Uncleanneſs*, or ſavour to *Ribaldry*, *Lightneſs*, or *Raillery*; and take care alſo that your *Similitudes* be *neat* and *clean*, as well as *pertinent*, leſt you move Laughter or Indignation in the Auditory, inſtead of Devotion.

5 Study more *Clearneſs*, than *Quaintneſs* of Expreſſion, and ſtrive rather to be Underſtood, than Admir'd by the unthinking Multitude.

6. Be *Modeſt*, *laſtly*, in whatever re-

lates

lates to your ſelf, but be *Zealous* in things belonging to the Almighty, and ſo you will diſcharge your Duty to the *benefit* of others and *comfort* of your ſelf.

I come in the laſt place, to ſhew you how you may, through God's Bleſſing, attain to a *Style* that will be *Uſeful* unto the Purpoſe.

1. You ſhould *read much* and *often* in *Engliſh* Authors, eſpecially the moſt celebrated *Sermon-Books*, and obſerve their Phraſe, and manner of Addreſs to their Auditors; and what you find commendable in their Style, be ſure to imitate. Since you are to Preach in *Engliſh*, being your Native Tongue, you cannot be better fitted with a good *Engliſh Style*, than by reading good and uſeful *Engliſh Books*, whoſe *Style* is *plain*, *neat* and *eaſy*; ſuch as the *Whole Duty of Man*, *Patrick's Pilgrim*, *Tillotſon's Sermons*, &c. by reading of thoſe you will not only be furniſhed with good *Matter* and *Method*, but with a good *Style* alſo.

2. *Write* all your *Sermons*, eſpecially at firſt, and take time to peruſe, weigh, and conſider the Phraſes and Expreſſions of them, how fit and proper they are,

and

and alter as you ſee cauſe; this will enable you to acquire an Elegant and Good, and will every day enable you to better your, *Style*.

3. Let not your *Sentences* be *too long*; to that end, force not many Things into *one Sentence*, but rather put things into *divers Sentences*, or omit them, if not very neceſſary to be mentioned; and ſo you will avoid being entangled in your Diſcourſe, and be Plain and Intelligible to your Auditory.

4. Above all, Labour throughly to *Underſtand the Point* you are upon, and get as clear Notions of it as you can; and then you will be able to write, and ſpeak clearly about it; but if you be *Cloudy* in your *Underſtanding*, tis no wonder your *Expreſſions* and *Style* be *Dark* and *Obſcure*.

Thus, Sir, I have, with all the *briefneſs* poſſible, given you my poor Sentiments on this Subject; perhaps more might be ſaid of it; but nothing more at preſent occurs to my Mind; if this then be Uſeful to you, your Acceptance and following

following of it, will be ſufficient Recompence to the weak Endeavours of,

SIR,

Your Servant,

Chriſtianus Philalethes.

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